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SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/24/2018  
TAGS: [KNNP](#) [PARM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [GG](#) [GR](#)  
SUBJECT: GEORGIA: GUIDANCE REQUESTED ON REMOVAL OF  
RADIOACTIVE SOURCES FROM SUKHUMI

REF: A. STATE 117568  
[1](#)B. 07 STATE 170386  
[1](#)C. 07 TBILISI 2088  
[1](#)D. 07 TBILISI 1240  
[1](#)E. 07 TBILISI 846  
[1](#)F. 07 STATE 4780  
[1](#)G. 06 STATE 186211  
[1](#)H. 06 TBILISI 2931

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires a.i. Kent Logsdon for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (U) This is an action request. Please see paragraph 5.

[1](#)2. (C) Summary and Comment: In spite of the August conflict and loss of official Georgian access to the Abkhazia separatist region, MFA officials continue to seek U.S. assistance to develop a plan to remove four high-level radioactive sources which remain in an inadequately secured facility in Sukhumi in the territory of Abkhazia, Georgia. Agreements between the governments of Russia and Georgia stalled in 2007, and previous approaches have now been overtaken by the events of August 2008, when the Russian Federation invaded Georgia and subsequently recognized the territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states. Because neither the Government of Georgia nor the USG currently has access to Abkhazia, the way forward is not clear. The use of a middleman, such as the IAEA, will likely be necessary; another direct USG approach to Russia is also a possibility.

#### PREVIOUS PLANS FOR REMOVAL DISRUPTED

[1](#)3. (C) For more than two years, Post has sought to facilitate the removal of four high-level radioactive sources from Sukhumi due to inadequate security. Although an agreement in principle was obtained in 2006 to remove the sources to a U.S.-funded storage facility in Mtskheta, this process later stalled when Abkhaz de facto authorities said that the director of the Russian Federal Atomic Energy Agency (ROSATOM) had agreed to fund a storage facility in Abkhazia. The ROSATOM director later informed Embassy Moscow that ROSATOM had not in fact agreed to this, but would remove the sources to the Russian Federation at its own expense, rather than leave them in Georgia. Embassy Moscow demarched the Russians in 2007, encouraging them to officially propose the removal of the high-level radioactive sources to the Russian Federation to the Georgians through a formal letter (ref B). It appears that such a letter was never delivered to the Government of Georgia, but, regardless, this approach has now been overtaken by the events of August 2008. For full background details, see refs B and C.

#### GEORGIAN OFFICIAL EXPRESSES CONCERN

[1](#)4. (C) In a meeting in September 2008 with PolOff and on the margins of the Nuclear Smuggling Outreach Initiative (NSOI) meeting on October 16, Nikoloz Rtveliashvili, Director,

Security Policy and Euro-Atlantic Integration Department, MFA, queried U.S. officials on the status of the removal process and plans for moving forward. Rtveliashvili indicated that Georgia seeks resolution of the issue, and he sought U.S. guidance. He will likely seek a reply during a November 19 meeting between NSOI and Georgian non-proliferation experts.

15. (U) Action Request. Post seeks guidance on how to respond to the Georgia query in preparation for the November 19 meeting. Embassy POC for this issue is Nicole O'Brien, Political/Economic Officer.  
LOGSDON